

LAB 01

Bringing Our Whole Selves: Inclusive Programs With and for Racialized LGBTTQQ2SIA Youth



Collaborative Designing for Youth Wellbeing

The Story of Our Design Day
10.29.2016



YOUTHREX
Research &
Evaluation eXchange



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ABSTRACT

The Design Day brought together youth sector stakeholders – youth, youth workers, policy makers, researchers, funders and citizens – to collaboratively tackle four ‘thorny’ challenges, that youth and youth workers experience. This event was hosted in collaboration with the Youth Opportunities Fund at the Ontario Trillium Foundation. This report is a snapshot of this Design Day and focuses on the Bringing Our Whole Selves: Inclusive Programs With and for Racialized LGBTTQQ2SIA Youth Lab. It shares the two prototype pitches that participants co-developed in response to the challenges identified in the Lab. It also includes reflections on the collaborative process along with resources and case study examples that can inspire our youth work.

KEYWORDS

innovation, design, idea lab, collaboration, strategic planning, community-based design, participatory process, youth outcomes, youth development, systems change, rural youth, Indigenous youth, racialized LGBTTQQ2SIA youth, youth work, collective self-care

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Foreword

The Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF) at the Ontario Trillium Foundation eagerly accepted YouthREX's invitation to co-host a Design Day on October 29, 2016. Together, we tackled four 'thorny' challenges that Ontario youth and youth workers experience. This report is a snapshot of this Design Day. The report includes the four Idea Lab challenges that the Design Day focused on and the eight prototype pitches that participants co-developed in response to these challenges, along with resources and case study examples that can inspire our youth work.

The **Youth Opportunities Fund** is an annual program of the Government of Ontario, administered by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. YOF provides grants and capacity-building supports to youth-led grassroots groups and collaboratives serving young people. Funded initiatives improve outcomes for youth facing multiple barriers to economic and social wellbeing. Similar to YouthREX, our work is grounded in ***Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed***.

We recognize that in order to do our work effectively and responsively, we must take time to listen to and learn with and from, all youth sector stakeholders including youth, frontline youth workers, researchers, policy-makers and funders across Ontario. So often, we can end up working in silos or in pre-defined structures where engagement is confined to formal roles. YOF was pleased to co-host this Design Day with YouthREX to break down those walls, hear from each other, and connect deeply over what we can all agree we're working towards: improving the lives of youth.

Using design thinking to explore issues that matter:

We were also happy to share our own learnings with YouthREX, gleaned from hosting multiple YOF Ideas Lab days, where we welcome youth to use design thinking to explore issues that matter to them and bring their ideas to life, while also learning about the YOF. We find this approach to be engaging and meaningful both for us and the youth. Collaborating with YouthREX on this Design Day was an opportunity to experience the intersection of design thinking with youth sector challenges and wisdom in a nuanced way. It was also an opportunity to explore an issue we are particularly interested in: increasing our understanding and meeting the needs of rural Ontario youth (Lab 03).

As this report shows, very fruitful dialogue and ideas were shared and explored. Like youth work, there were moments of connection and tension, times when some of us broke away from the schedule or planned activities, and many valuable learning moments – both expected and unexpected.

We hope this report continues to breathe life into the important ideas that were seeded at this event.

Thank you to everyone who participated or supported the execution of this day! We look forward to collaborating again.

Tabish Surani

Lead, Program Delivery, Youth Opportunities Fund
Ontario Trillium Foundation

Thank you to everyone who participated in this Design Day. This report captures just a fraction of the wisdom that was shared; we are grateful for everyone who worked through the activities with a spirit of collaboration, patience, and a true commitment to youth wellbeing.

DESIGN DAY PARTICIPANTS

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*YouthREX reached out to these individuals to facilitate the discussions in each Idea Lab. They helped to guide conversations and provide contextual information based on their extensive knowledge and experience, whether lived, practice and/or research-based.

YOUTHREX DESIGN DAY ORGANIZERS

Anita Sekharan	Uzo Anucha
Rebecca Hower	Yumi Numata

About the Design Day

OVERVIEW

The Design Day brought together youth sector stakeholders – youth, youth workers, policy makers, researchers, funders and citizens – to collaboratively tackle four ‘thorny’ challenges, or Idea Labs, that youth and youth workers experience. This event was hosted in collaboration with the Youth Opportunities Fund at the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Design Day participants were provided with ‘challenge briefs’ that provided participants with a summary of the context, key information, and suggested challenge questions to act as prompts for the day. Group of four to six individuals took on one of the Idea Lab challenges (two groups per challenge) and worked together to generate new ideas, or variations on existing innovations for advancing youth wellbeing on these issues. Everyone present was invested in the topic areas and had specific experience and knowledge to bring to the table, whether lived, practice or research-based.

This event was designed to provide participants with an opportunity to collaboratively work with peers from multiple vantage points in the sector to co-create recommendations on each Lab topic. The activities moved participants through developing a common understanding of the issue(s) at hand, ideation and prototyping solutions/recommendations. At the end of the day, each of the eight groups shared, or ‘pitched’ their idea/prototype to the larger group.

YouthREX committed to sharing the solutions and recommendations from the Design Day widely within the youth sector through a knowledge mobilization strategy crafted around the contributions and outcomes of each Ideas Lab. This report is part of this strategy.

DESIGN DAY GOALS

- Share knowledge
- Learn from other perspectives
- Collaborate to design uniquely tangible recommendations or solutions for advancing youth wellbeing

PROPOSED OUTCOMES

- Increased collaboration amongst diverse youth sector stakeholders around a ‘thorny’ issue
- Develop a common understanding of the problem
- Design and prototype solutions

IDEA LAB TOPICS

LAB 01 // Bringing Our Whole Selves: Inclusive Programs With And For Racialized LBTTQQ2SIA Youth

LAB 02 // Indigenizing Youth Work: Towards A New Relationship

LAB 03 // Far And Farther: Equitable Access To Programs, Services, And Opportunities For Youth Living In Rural And Remote Communities

LAB 04 // Beyond The Individual: Community/ Collective Approaches To Youth Worker Wellbeing

MaRS Solutions Lab facilitated this event, guiding participants through a collaborative process of discovery that included: problem framing, ideation, and prototyping of solutions. This approach, which included issues and stakeholder mapping, enabled participants to identify and design strategies and interventions for change.

Youth Opportunities Fund at the Ontario Trillium Foundation collaborated on this event with YouthREX, co-planning, engaging stakeholders to participate, hosting Idea Lab 03, *Far And Farther: Equitable Access To Programs, Services, And Opportunities For Youth Living In Rural And Remote Communities*, and participating throughout the day.

The Agenda

10 AM

Welcome + Introduction

Welcome by YouthREX and YOF

Introduction: The What & How of Design Jams
by MaRS Solution Lab (MSL)



10:15 AM

Icebreaker

Visualizing the Social Safety Net activity
by Youth Philanthropy Initiative



11:00 AM

Understanding the Problem: Mapping the Challenge



12:45 PM

Networking lunch

1:15 PM

Ideation

Generating ideas for interventions



2:15 PM

Break

2:30 PM

Prototyping

Building the pitches



3:20 PM



Idea Lab Pitches

Each of group had five minutes to present their prototype to the room and answer the following questions: What is the problem? What is the idea? How does your prototype change the user experience of your persona?

3:50 PM

Closing Remarks and Next Steps



4:00 PM

Close



01 // ICEBREAKER

Visualizing the Social Safety Net hosted by Rachel Paris, Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI)

To start the day off, everyone gathered in a big circle to participate in an icebreaker called ‘Visualizing the Social Safety Net’. Participants were assigned a badge representing one of the following: 1) social institution, 2) type of social service, or 3) marginalized group/ social issue. They took turns tossing a ball of yarn across the circle, identifying relationships between people and parts of the system, while holding their section of yarn to create a visual trail or ‘net’ to represent those connections.

This activity gave participants a visual, thought-provoking, and hands-on way to explore how the social services system works. It was an interactive way to visually see and reflect on who, why, and how diverse members of the community may be served/underserved/not served by the system, how connections can be built, and where we can support youth to engage within this system.

Design Day Activities:

A Step-by-Step Snapshot of the Day



02 // UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM: MAPPING THE CHALLENGE

Issues Map

Participants brainstormed issues and challenges associated with the challenge outlined in their Idea Lab brief.

The Stakeholder Map

This activity gave participants the opportunity to think through all the stakeholders involved in the issue outlined in the Idea Lab challenge at hand.

Experience Map

This activity had participants focusing on the experience of the key user/stakeholder they were designing for. The activity helped participants empathetically think through the issues and feelings of the user they were designing for, who this user interacts with, and what they experience/do when dealing with the challenge at hand.



03 // IDEATION: GENERATING IDEAS FOR INTERVENTIONS

Prioritizing Ideas

Participants brainstormed ideas for interventions on Post-It Notes and then mapped out all their ideas on a matrix based on feasibility and impact. This allowed them to see what ideas would have high impact and be feasible, versus those that were low impact and not very feasible.

04 // PROTOTYPING: BUILDING YOUR IDEA

The Prototype Idea sheet aided participants in thinking through key elements of the one idea they ended up choosing to prototype. The sheet outlines the idea, the user, the key problem, and how the creators could test the idea out. The second prototype sheet is a feedback sheet that gives space for the creators to write down useful feedback, assumptions, and potential changes to their idea.

Please see the Appendix for all worksheets.

LAB 01

Bringing Our Whole Selves: Inclusive Programs With and for Racialized LGBTQQ2SIA Youth

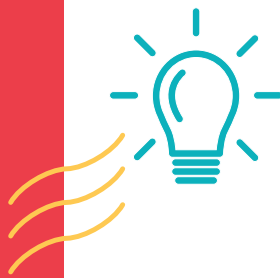


“Anytime those worlds start to **cross over** in terms of **race** and **culture** and **class**, I think a lot of stuff goes along with it.”

– DALEY ET. AL, 2007, P. 22

“The **more ‘isms’** you have to deal with, the **harder it is.**”

– DALEY ET. AL, 2007, P. 22



a. Background

THE CONTEXT

Racialized LGBTTTQ2SSIA youth offer unique insights, perspectives, experiences and solutions to an array of contemporary challenges and yet they face significant and overlapping barriers to inclusion. LGBTTTQ2SSIA youth and racialized youth disproportionately experience bullying and violence, discrimination, homelessness, poor physical and mental health outcomes, and lack of interpersonal and community support. When youth are both LGBTTTQ2SSIA and racialized these challenges are compounded; these youth face interlocking structures of disadvantage. For the purposes of this Idea Lab, **racialized¹** refers to those who are Aboriginal and non-White in race.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Recent studies indicate that the vast majority of research on racialized youth of colour focuses on a single dimension of their experience rather than engaging with intersectional realities and compounded outcomes. Furthermore, the majority of studies take an individual, pathological, deficit or risk assessment approach rather than viewing them as community leaders and placing their experiences within broader structures and systems. Additionally, “there is mounting evidence of racism within the White LGBTQ community. In addition to overt racism,

racial and ethnic minority individuals have reported experiencing different forms of discrimination in their LGBTQ communities” (Ghabrial, 2016). Studies confirm the recently articulated position of Black Lives Matter Toronto that there are relatively few positive youth development opportunities for racialized LGBTTTQ2SSIA youth. The fact that mainstream practitioners are predominantly white is another issue; this could hinder access to services for racialized youth. Where services do exist, youth are often forced to choose between race/ethnicity and sex and gender. Research concludes: “intervention strategies based on single identity constructions of LGBTTTQ2SSIA youth may be of limited help” (Daley et. al, 2007, p. 24).

While there is limited research that is specific to the Ontario context, within the youth sector there are programs, services, and organizations that are designing opportunities for racialized LGBTTTQ2SSIA youth. However, the supports and services offered are still relatively few and often work in siloes from the broader youth sector. Due to a lack of research, practitioners are often left guessing how to best work with racialized LGBTTTQ2SSIA youth, with the potential consequence that the youth do not benefit from experiences that are culturally responsive.

¹ Race is a social construct, as opposed to a biological reality, and racialization is a process of “othering” or of ascribing difference between people. Technically we are all racialized. Based on context, some people benefit from processes of racialization and others do not. In this case, we are looking at the negative effects of racialization on Aboriginal and non-white youth. Both the Canadian Census and the Employment Equity Act exclude Aboriginal peoples from its definition of visible minorities (or what we now know as racialized). However, Aboriginal peoples, like us all, are racialized and suffer negative impacts associated with the way they have been racialized in Canada. Even though Aboriginal peoples have been historically excluded from the definition of visible minority or racialized people, we choose to include them because the groups’ exclusion reinforces their invisibility from research and projects such as this.

THE CHALLENGE

The realities and needs of racialized LGBTQ2SIA youth with intersectional identities are not being met. The demographics of Ontario are becoming increasingly diverse and as a sector we need to offer opportunities for all youth to thrive and bring their whole selves, not just one dimension, to our programs, services, and initiatives.

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

How might we move beyond identifying the service needs and gaps that racialized LGBTQ2SIA face, to pro-actively designing pathways to inclusion in the youth sector?

How might we design youth sector services, programs, and opportunities that critically embrace intersectionality?

How might we critically create positive and inclusive youth development opportunities for all youth?

216 EXCHANGE DAY
TABLEHOLDER MAP

LAB ISSUE:

U Cup

Fundline worker support group

CAS CASH

Dotties

ASO's AIDS service Org.

Service providers who share community

Other LGBT people health care

LGBT service providers networks

Hospitals GNMH, other

Skilled programming

Online program

GSA's

Young people / peers

Self-starting groups

Religious spiritual groups

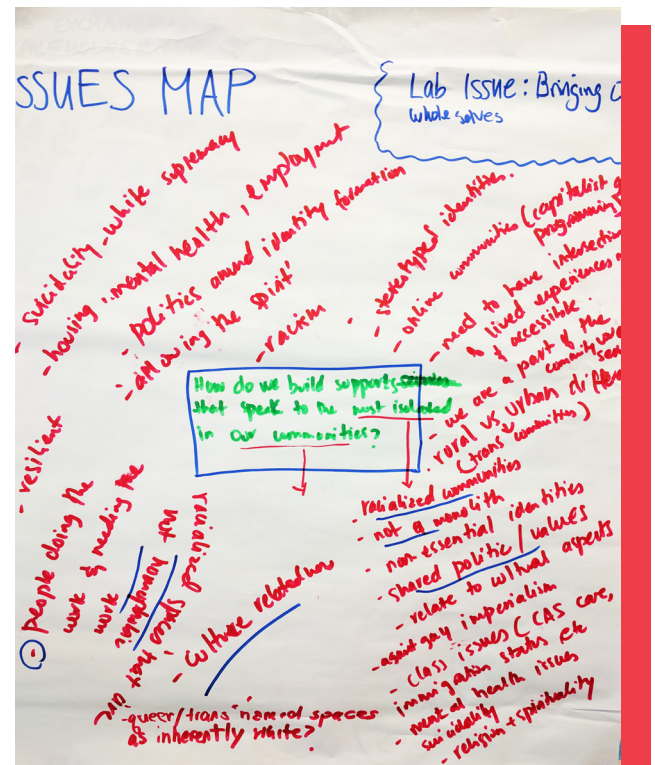
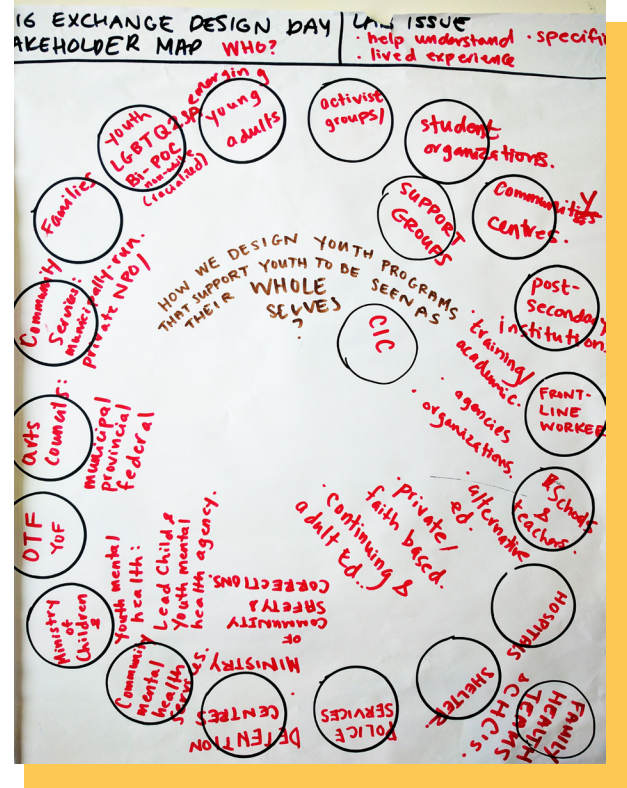
Funders

Black LGBT Orgs / GAY / LESBIAN / BISEXUAL - non white

Climo - special orgs

Tech Depts

Challenging dominant spaces



b. Exploring the Issue

Mapping the Challenge for Interventions

Racialized LBTTQQ2SIA youth experience a range of barriers to wellbeing. While groups took care to attend to issues of intersectionality that extend beyond race, gender, and sexuality, they also identified intersectional identities as strengths and not problems to be solved. If the challenges racialized LBTTQQ2SIA experience are emphasized over their strengths and gifts, this can reinforce deficit-driven and pathologized responses. The problems youth face are not within the youth themselves but are embedded with current social orders that are exclusionary and not designed to be sufficiently responsive to: a) addressing challenges and b) promoting the strengths and gifts of racialized LBTTQQ2SIA.

Both groups identified racism and white supremacy as real and permeating mainstream services and institutions. While groups described the need for spaces, networks, and opportunities for racialized LBTTQQ2SIA youth to positively explore and develop their intersectional identities, they also highlighted immediate service needs related to: mental health (suicidality), housing, employment, and physical health.

Resource scarcity presents a significant barrier to being able to provide responsive programs and spaces

as well as make services accessible by providing food, money, transit, vouchers, and employment. Most of the funding goes to large established organizations. Some of the stakeholders outside of “the Big 5” that can offer opportunities and supports to racialized LBTTQQ2SIA youth identified by the groups include:

- Ethno-specific organizations (Punjabi orgs, Aid Service Organization)
- Peers with lived experience
- Frontline workers support groups
- Spiritual/religion groups
- Online supports
- Recreation spaces
- Informal networks
- Arts councils
- Grassroots activist groups/students

Groups recognized and engaged with the systemic barriers racialized LBTTQQ2SIA youth experience, but both kept the youth and their needs at the centre of their proposals.

c. Ideation

ISSUES

Suicidality
White supremacy
Housing, mental health, and employment
Politics around identity formation
Stereotypes and identities
Online communities
Racism
Racialized communities
Class issues
CAS care
Immigration status
Health issues
Religion and spirituality
Intersectionality and lived experiences
Resilience
LGBTQQ2SIA/trans spaces
Layers of oppression

IDEAS

Funders to distribute funding more evenly (outside Big Gay 5)
Resource non-Black, non-Indigenous pocs
Space for LGBTQ folks in non-LGBTQ agencies
Group spaces to build connections
Low-income passes
Accountability for workers to be LGBT+
Tangible supports such as food, money, and employment
Food and tokens without hassle
Decriminalizing drugs and sex work

d. Prototyping & Pitches



PITCH ONE

A QTBIPOC MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

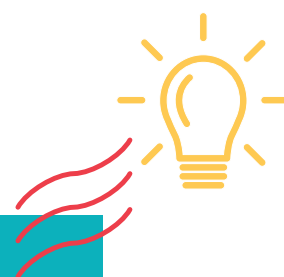
How do we build supports that speak to the most isolated in our communities?

THE PROBLEM

The group described some of the major issues disproportionately affecting LGBTTQQ2SIA BIPOCS, such as racism, suicidality, poverty, and stereotypes/discourses. They also noted the challenges of providing safe housing, meaningful employment, and mental health services.

THE PITCH

The strategy focused on mental health services by and for BIPOCS (Black and Indigenous People of Colour), prioritizing Black and Indigenous service providers. These services would include support by and for peer workers; it aims to address issues of isolation, invisibility, gaps in services and silos. This group stressed that “mental health is not sexy – we don’t need it to be. There is no pressure to be ‘innovative’, just to meaningfully address the issues at hand.”



PITCH TWO

A MOBILE OUTREACH TEAM

How do we design youth programs that support youth to be seen as their whole selves?

THE PROBLEM

Racialized (Black and Indigenous) youth are discriminated against and treated unfairly. Intersectionality of being both racialized and LGBTTTQQ2SIA creates complexity. We need to move beyond the language and practices of pathologizing and presenting 'queerness' and 'being racialized'.

THE PITCH

The Mobile Outreach Team would connect youth in need to services for LGBTTTQQ2SIA youth of colour by travelling to identified sites (ie. schools, community hubs etc.) to provide in person support and resources. This idea addresses the lack of existing visible community advocates and increases outreach and the ability for communities to collectively identify and support youth in need.



Mobile York South Simcoe Youth Walk-In Clinic (MOBYSS)

www.mobyss.ca | [#LetsMeetInRealLife](https://twitter.com/LetsMeetInRealLife)

WHERE: York Region and South Simcoe

WHO: Youth 12-25 years of age

HOW: A youth-centered and holistic perspective influences MOBYSS framework. The team consists of a nurse practitioner, youth counselor, and peer support specialist. The team provides confidential sexual health and education for youth, using a 'welcoming, non-judgmental, and inclusive approach'. Some of the services they provide include contraception, pregnancy testing and counseling, testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, cervical screens and pelvic exams, sexual orientation support, and sexual health education.

The nurse practitioner provides various health care services, including: assessment, diagnosis and treatment of acute illnesses, preventative health care, wound care, and lab testing. Furthermore, they provide medical referrals and video access to specialists in the RV. The Youth Mental Health Workers and Peer Support Specialists are trained to support youth with mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, and suicidality. They approach their work with a harm reduction perspective and knowledge/experiences of issues unique to LGBTQ youth.

CASE STUDY



BYP100 Black Youth Project 100

byp100.org | [@byp_100](https://twitter.com/@byp_100)

WHERE: BYP100 has chapters in cities across the United States, including Chicago, Milwaukee, Washington, New York City, and New Orleans.

WHO: 18-35 year old members of the Black community

WHAT: BYP100 is dedicated to creating justice and freedom for all Black people. They do their work through a Black LBTTQQ2SIA feminist lens. They work as a collective to organize and advocate on behalf of the Black community.

Through grassroots organizing training, they empower Black leaders to make an impact on their communities and share their message. They bring together Black leaders to advocate for the rights of LGBT people and women. They also run campaigns and advocate for the dismantling of the criminalization of Black youth and police brutality against Black youth. Their work seeks to be inclusive of all young Black people and they are committed to creating a welcoming environment. Members pay a monthly \$10 fee and are expected to dedicate 3 hours a week of their time to BYP100. In return, they receive voting power, campaign and project proposal power, and are invited to attend local and national events.

CASE STUDY

“There is no pressure to be ‘innovative’, just to meaningfully address the issues at hand.”

Conclusion

The Design Day was rich in ideas, connections and learning!

This was the first time YouthREX used design-thinking to frame an event of this kind, and we learned so much from the experience and from all the participants. We would like to conclude by highlighting five of the ideas that stood out to us based on feedback forms completed by designers and our team’s experiences of the day:

1. Innovation is not always about the new

At the end of the day, a designer prefaced their group’s pitch by saying “there is no pressure to be innovative, just to meaningfully address the issues at hand”. This comment resonated with the larger group, with many people nodding their head in agreement and thanking them for making that sentiment explicit. Most of the ideas that were pitched also reflected this notion – we don’t need to be inventing completely new programming or ways to support young people for the sake of “the new”. Innovation can include returning to models and strategies that already exist, and then designing ways to intentionally leverage and learn from them in order to fine-tune, and/or expand them where appropriate and as needed.

2. Foster connections and support each other

While the issues/challenges that each Idea Lab came up with were specific to the context of their particular topic, there were common issues and challenges across all eight labs such as a sense of isolation, invisibility, and the pressure to bear the burden of external forces – lack of funding, resources, staff and safe spaces. In response to these issues/challenges, the pitches that labs developed focused on facilitating and enhancing connections and communication between and among youth and youth sector stakeholders. Whether online or face-to-face, it is clear that the need for people to feel connected to one another, to be able to ask questions or find/give support and to be part of community, is vital; many do not feel these kinds of opportunities currently exist (in the context of their youth sector work). Designers further expressed a need to more broadly support youth sector work by creating opportunities and conditions for engaging with each other differently, and in a more meaningful way.

3. Engage the power of technology

The pitches also reflect the desire, and perhaps need, for the youth sector to integrate technology more effectively into our work. When designed and used respectfully, groups who prototyped digital spaces such as the Youth Talk App or the Online Platform for Youth Workers cited the importance of hosting a safe space for conversation, for knowledge sharing, for connecting youth and youth stakeholders to resources and support – all in an accessible and efficient way. Digital tools and platforms have the potential of greatly increasing accessibility to information, resources, and of course, the human connections that are so valued. At the same time, technological adoption cannot replace human face-to-face relationships. One designer suggested that we need to also reflect on the effects “technologicalization” can have on change and development work.

4. Leverage what already exists

Implicit throughout all the pitches is that there is valuable knowledge, resources, services and programming that already exists, but often in silos. As such, the pitches focus on creating ways to draw out this information, create conditions that allow for connection and access to information and resources. Designers recognized value in networking their assets to provide enhanced opportunities for youth. This is not to say that new or increased funding/resources are not needed –in order to create these spaces and opportunities for human connection, resources in terms of people, time, money and different skillsets are required.

5. Adapt tools and processes to your context

Youth sector stakeholders, including youth, strongly value building connections and learning through participatory and engaging activities/processes. This is why YouthREX thought that design-thinking processes/activities might be a good way to bring people together to brainstorm and work on ideas to address “thorny” issues. Reflecting on the feedback we received on how people experienced the day, we learned that although design-thinking processes work well at engaging people to focus on the “user experience” and to think through an issue in a focused way that is collaborative and highly generative, these processes might be too focused on moving forward to solutions. This may not align with the complexity of youth wellbeing/youth sector challenges, equity and intersectionality, or the work that stakeholders want or need to do together before arriving at ideas and solutions.

Design-thinking tools and processes clearly need to be better adapted to our youth sector context. We will need ways to create more space for rich, nuanced discussions to unpack the issues and challenges we experience in our sector. Many of the challenges that youth and the youth sector are facing are deeply rooted in complexity. While there is definitely

a need to collaboratively search for solutions and new approaches to addressing these challenges, there is also the need to take time to understand the situation, learn more about the system and find ways to create the conditions for change – all within an equity-focused frame of understanding.

As such, we will be asking ourselves:

- How we can use design-thinking tools and processes to support our work, but adapt them and integrate them with other processes that could better reflect and engage the youth sector?
- What kinds of opportunities will allow us to engage with complexity and systems thinking/ mapping in a way that is accessible and meaningful to youth sector stakeholders?
- How can we use design thinking and its processes to support engagement with complexity?
- How might we integrate tenants of equity and social justice within all of these processes?

Final Words

We would like to end this recap of the Design Day by expressing our deep gratitude and thanks to all the community designers who came out on a cold Saturday and brought their whole selves to participate and engage in sometimes difficult conversations about how we can tackle issues of importance to youth wellbeing. Although this recap doesn't quite do enough to capture the energy, excitement and tensions of the day, we hope it offers some valuable insights to youth sector stakeholders and affirmation of the work and experiences of our community designers.



This Design Day Report was developed by Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange (YouthREX).

YouthREX is primarily funded by the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services with extensive contributions from York University and the four partner universities: Carleton University; King's College University at Western University; Laurentian University and Lakehead University.

Visit the eXchange for everything about youth work and youth wellbeing!

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